

Spring 1991

# Women's Studies Newsletter May 1991

Women's Studies

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# WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER

MAY, 1991

This issue of the Women's Studies Newsletter represents a departure from the usual format of showcasing student papers and on to a format that is more issues oriented. In the future some issues will feature student classroom work and some will be issues oriented; in either case students will remain the primary contributors. Any feedback on the new format is welcome.

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**DENISON**  
UNIVERSITY



## NOW'S Young Feminist Conference

On February 1, 2, and 3, 1991, I attended the National Organization for Women's Young Feminist Conference in Akron, Ohio. There were women (and men!) there from 45 states, and approximately 400 people attended (my estimation, not an official one). Four workshop sessions were offered, with a choice of ten amazing presentations for each session. There were also three plenary sessions featuring groovy speakers such as Molly Yard, President of NOW.

In addition to the educational environment provided by the workshops and the larger sessions, the conference provided ample time for special-interest caucuses which modified and improved the official NOW agenda. Resolutions were passed in favor of the following objectives: establishment of annual conferences specifically for young feminists, provision of extensive educational resources about rape, support for gay and lesbian rights, women's abortion rights and other issues pertinent to feminism, and the creation of a "Conference Implementation Committee" to continually examine NOW undertakings from a young feminist perspective (since we are the future of the women's movement). I left one complete copy of all of the resolutions presented over the weekend in the Women's Resource Center (I can't say that they're all the resolutions that were passed because I left early, but they were all presented); there are also order forms for audio tapes of all of the workshops and larger sessions--had I not been completely broke, I would have bought at least four of them.

Workshops covered a huge range of topics, since one of the main ideas stressed throughout the entire conference was that of inclusiveness, since feminism (at least in its newest definition) is more about human and

global rights than singularly women's rights. The subjects included those listed below.

- Recovery from incest and/or rape
- Partner and date battering
- Reproductive freedom as affected by race, class, age, ability
- Parenting non-violent, non-sexist children (terrific panel & discussion)
- Feminist Spirituality (this wasn't too impressive, I heard)
- Affirmative Action
- Women in the military
- Feminization of poverty/Women and welfare
- Feminist political candidates & electoral strategies
- Pay Equity
- Pornography/Objectification/Media violence
- Legal oppression of lesbians and gays
- Gender balance laws
- Nationalized health care (presented a very convincing case for a national health plan from humanistic, economical and political perspectives)
- Organizing a NOW chapter
- AIDS and women's health care
- Operation Rescue (which was consistently referred to as "Operation Oppress-You")
- Sexual harassment at work and/or school
- Contraceptive technology in the future
- George Bush's hypocrisy in calling himself "The Family President" and "The Education President"
- Organizing a third political party (to address the fact that even Democrats don't do anything anymore for the non-white/male/straight/wealthy/young/able-bodied/violent/etc... population)
- Laws which oppress women in various ways, in all areas
- Eco-feminism
- Connecting issues of race, class, sexual orientation, age, size and ability with the feminist



movement (this was very enlightening to me as a white, middle-class, relatively straight, small, physically-abled woman)

Networking to organize a grassroots political force

Male violence (from both female and concerned male perspectives)

The new rise of religious fundamentalism in the US

Helping people become comfortable with the word "feminism" (like my mother)

Effective fundraising for your group

Using the media to your advantage

Assertiveness training

Feminist humor (this was given by the hilarious feminist comic who performed one night)

So the workshops covered a humongous range of issues--a lot of them I hadn't considered before because I hadn't been faced with them. The larger sessions provided us with specific knowledge about problems that we could address by working as "activists" in whatever sense we chose.

During one session we saw the film "Abortion Denied" which explained the parental-consent laws instituted in many states since they were given the power to challenge Roe v. Wade; it showed the story of Becky Bell who died as a result of the parental consent law in Indiana (my home state--great), and afterward her brother spoke about the need to get rid of these laws. We also learned about Rosie Jimenez, a poor woman who could not get a legal abortion under public health care and couldn't afford a surgeon, and died as a result of back-alley abortion.

We also heard success stories to encourage us: Bridgetta Bourne protested, lobbied for, and elected a deaf president at Gallaudet College for deaf students; Nancy Bowles organized a huge group of Oregon students who filled voting places with abortion rights information and succeeded in defeating

two ballot measures restricting abortion rights; Molly Yard told us of her however-many years of being a feminist and cool woman.

Open-mike sessions occurred at the end of every plenary session, and they always ran at least over one hour.

Women encouraged each other when they were being righteous, called each other out when they were being racist, heterosexist or otherwise

discriminatory. Men spoke and said, "We're not all pigs, really!" (Brave, brave, brave.) There was a lot of anger that, unfortunately, sometimes led to women turning on each other--I guess when you are faced for 48 hours with all kinds of evidence of injustice (especially drink prices at the hotel bar), it's normal to want to take out your anger on someone!

The First National NOW Young Feminist Conference was definitely a worthwhile, enlightening and motivating experience. Plans are now in the making for an entire sub-branch of NOW created especially for young feminists (see the resolutions in the WRC). If anyone reading this has the chance to go next year -- GO! I thought it would be helpful to hear what it was like, in order to boost attendance at the next conference and at all kinds of women's-issues meetings. Call me or leave a note in my box if you want to hear more.

-- Ellen Stader

## NO COMMENT

From tidbits discovered by or shared with WRC folk recently:

### Equal Pay For Equal Worth?

A recent survey of fourth graders in Delaware County, Ohio reported in The Columbus Dispatch showed that girls' average weekly allowances are \$1.82 compared with \$2.86 for boys. Also boys more often had to perform specific chores in order to earn their allowance,



while girls received money "as needed."  
One teacher said "Girls, I think, are expected to set the table or make their bed without necessarily being compensated." The survey was a project for a math class.

### **Now It's One, Two, Three, Four, What Are We Fighting For...**

From the Manual for Female Troops  
Serving in Saudi Arabia given to women soldiers about to depart for the gulf:

- \* Expect to be seated on the rear of public buses.
- \* Expect to be refused service in some establishments.
- \* Avoid making eye contact with Saudi males.

### **He Is Making Old and Her**

She steps quietly out of bed  
to rest her cheek against  
the cool glass  
and write her name  
from her breath on the window.

He rustles in the sheets  
so she drifts into the kitchen  
where the hiss of cracked eggs  
onto the pan is familiar  
and somehow soothing.  
He slides a fork  
circling crumbs around  
an empty brown plate  
and she clears as he escapes  
through the front door.

The minutes tick by on her mother's  
wall clock,  
befriending her as she soaps dirty dishes  
and changes white sheets to navy.  
Shuffling from room to room she  
pauses to touch a china saucer from  
the glass cabinet,  
grasping it tightly and tracing the  
designs with her eyes again and again;  
and smelling everything,  
the pages of an old magazine  
filled with soup recipes,  
his shirt slung over a chairback.  
She hugs it hollow and soundless.

The door knob rattles as  
the table is set once again;  
his feet up,  
newspaper open,  
cigar lit.

The evening light drifts  
through the window pane behind him  
and he looks very soft to her.  
But the light is making him hot he says  
as he pulls the shade.

-- Anne Mulligan

### **WOMEN'S EMPHASIS ACTIVITIES**

Denison's feminist student organization, Women's Emphasis, has organized several successful activities during the 1990-91 school year. The goals of Women's Emphasis for the year were to make the campus aware of issues concerning reproductive freedom, date rape, the lack of social alternatives for women at Denison, campus safety, self-defense and other issues concerning the sexual equality of women at Denison and in society as a whole.

One of the most successful activities was the Pro-Choice Rally in the fall which included speakers from the Newark and Granville communities as well as Denison professors and staff. NARAL representative Barbara Maurer addressed the audience, along with local Pro-Choice candidates and a representative of the Celebrezze gubernatorial campaign. Women's Emphasis also registered voters and educated the Denison community on issues of reproductive freedom, informing students of the Pro-Choice candidates in their states and encouraging them to vote. We brought local Pro-Choice candidate Marc Guthrie to campus to speak and organized door to door campaigning for him. He was elected to office.

Other activities included the organization of a group that attended the National Abortion Rights Action League



Benefit Concert for Choice in Columbus last fall. Also several members of Women's Emphasis attended a NARAL sponsored Campus Organizing Workshop in Columbus. Later in the fall a group attended a Pro-Choice rally at Ohio Wesleyan and a Celebrezze rally in Columbus.

Women's Emphasis also organized the signing of petitions to keep the right to choose and sent them to local and national political representatives. We organized letter writing and attendance at rallies in support of reproductive freedom. The group sponsored an ad in the *Denisonian* which included the signatures of Denison students who wanted to publicly announce their support for a woman's right to choose. Women's Emphasis also co-sponsored the Guerilla Girls along with several date rape and self-defense workshops.

During spring semester Women's Emphasis sponsored Women's Week which took place the week of March 4-8. March 4th was Career Night featuring Denison Alumnae who returned to Denison to speak about their careers and how they feel about being women in their line of work. On March 6th the all female singing group Ladies Night Out performed in Slayter. Debra Schipper gave a self-defense workshop on March 7th, and on March 8th the band Blake Babies performed in the Bandersnatch and Women's Emphasis sponsored the \$1 imports and rented a tent for the occasion.

-- Christine Thompson

### NEW WRC ACQUISITIONS

The Women's Resource Center is a place to browse, study, relax, search for information and network with others who are concerned about women's issues. Please stop by and visit anytime. Recent additions to the WRC Library include the following materials:

Women, Health, and Medicine in America: An Historical Handbook, edited by Rima D. Apple, 1990, Garland Publishing.

This excellent anthology contains chapters by well-known scholars from history, sociology, nursing, women's studies and other disciplines dealing with women and the health care system and feminism and medical ideology. Topics include a history of childbirth in America, race as a factor in women's health, historical perspectives on women and mental illness, and women's "toxic" experience, among others.

Rape and Sexual Assault: A Research Handbook, edited by Ann Wolbert Burgess, 1985, Garland Publishing and Rape and Sexual Assault II, by Burgess, 1988, Garland Publishing.

Ann Wolbert Burgess is perhaps the best known researcher in the U.S. on the subject of sexual assault. We owe our understanding of rape trauma syndrome and post-traumatic stress response to her along with a debt for her tireless mobilization of resources on rape and sexual assault. Each volume in this set contains vital research articles, including some which focus on the anti-rape movement, sex crimes against children, incest, pornography and rape, rapists and other sex offenders, marital rape (written by anthropologist Kersti Yllo, a Denison graduate), the sexual abuse of boys, and Mary Koss' research on sexual aggression among college males.

Ivory Power: Sexual Harassment on Campus, edited by Michele A. Paludi, 1990, State University of New York Press.

"Current estimates suggest that at least 30% of undergraduate women experience sexual harassment by at least one professor during their four years in college. When definitions of sexual harassment include gender harassment (sexist comments and behavior), the incidence is 70%. Ivory Power discusses current research and



theory on sexual harassment in higher education" (quoted from the book jacket). Some of the following issues are discussed in the book: the emotional impact of harassment, the impact of harassment on physical health, and educational interventions and developmental models for challenging attitudes that perpetuate harassment.

Inter/View: Talks With America's Writing Women, by Mickey Pearlman and Katherine Usher Henderson, 1990, The University Press of Kentucky.

Pearlman and Henderson interviewed twenty-eight contemporary American women writers about their lives and their work. The writers are well-known and less-known, and diverse by age, race, ethnicity and interest. Those profiled include Marge Piercy, Joyce Carol Oates, Gloria Naylor, Amy Tan and Louise Erdrich, among others. A chapter on Susan Fromberg Schaeffer is dedicated to the memory of Nan Nowik.

Papers from the Wellesley College Center For Research On Women: "Rape and the Politics of Race, 1865-1910," by Elizabeth Pleck; "Infant Mortality and Social Policy," by Carolyn W. Arnold; "School Age Child Care in America: Final Report of a National Provider Survey," by Fern Marx; "Race and Class in the Intersection of Work and Family Among Women Employed in the Service Sector," by Nancy L. Marshall and Rosalind C. Barnett. For those who dare, I especially recommend two papers by Peggy McIntosh which deal with interpersonal racism, sexism and heterosexual privilege. They provide a strong basis for assessing individual attitudes concerning social and cultural differences, and could be used to provoke powerful discussions in any classroom dealing with these issues. One is "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." The second is "Interactive Phases of Curricular and

Personal Re-Vision With Regard to Race."

Class Porn, by Molly Hite, 1987, The Crossing Press.

Trashy, fun feminist reading: "Eleanor Nyland, the brilliant but naive heroine of this very funny novel, is a university lecturer who all her life has wanted to follow the rules - if only she could figure out what they were. In the old boys club of academe she finally begins to understand the rules but can hardly believe them. Living alone after her husband runs off with a graduate student and daily coming up against the patriarchal nature of academia, harassed by a secret admirer and bored to tears by her students' papers, she finds her only solace in writing a pornographic novel for women, but even here she finds she is having trouble with the rules" (book jacket quote).

-- Lisa Ransdell

#### A MODERN FAIRY TALE: THE OPPRESSION LIVES ON

"Princess Vivian, come down," Prince Charming proclaims as he looks to the top of the tower for his beloved. He ascends the steps, roses in hand, to rescue his princess. The beautiful woman emerges, glowing with a heart-warming smile. She lets her hair down and meets her saviour, and they live happily -- but wait -- they have been part of an ironic fantasy that makes explicit what was operating from the start: this is a 20th century fairy tale.

The prince inquires of the princess, "So what happened after he climbed up the tower and rescued her?"

"She rescues him right back," the princess replies, still beaming with love. Bingo! She has just stated the most important line of the movie, but it seems a bit too late. A second later, the couple kiss, and the movie ends.

Viewers file out of the theater with a



lovestruck happiness. Most don't think of the underlying implications of the film. The princess does indeed rescue her prince, but male superiority swallows this recognition.

Touchstone Pictures' hit release Pretty Woman (1990), directed by Garry Marshall, may attempt to liberate women by giving them a sense of power, but the oppression of women in the movie overturns any hope for their salvation. This movie turns Edward Lewis (Richard Gere), an emotionless, wealthy corporate raider, into Prince Charming. Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts), a hooker from Hollywood Boulevard, is now Cinderella. Edward saves this wretched prostitute from the valley of sin. Vivian, however, rescues her hero, as well. This stretch of the imagination works, as the film persuades the viewers to accept such a ridiculous parallel. Viewers may recognize the incredibility of this film, yet they allow it, wanting the film to work.

The movie convinces viewers that this corporate raider gets lost while looking for his hotel and ends up on Hollywood Boulevard, asking a prostitute for directions. Edward picks Vivian up, and the romance begins. He hires her for the evening, intrigued by her character. Immediately, we see that Vivian is no ordinary hooker. As Brian D. Johnson said in his review, "...there is nothing sleazy about her character" (66). It is true that Vivian seems to be a wholesome girl, with the exception of her career. She wants to get off the streets and has a determined and spunky spirit, and most importantly, she has a heart. Edward, on the other hand, needs love, and Vivian soon finds the key to his heart. An educated, wealthy man, he seems to have it all, with the exception of love. His tale of a childhood with an unfeeling father elicits pity from the audience and provides an excuse for his oppressive and cold-hearted actions. The Prince may be a little less charming, but he is

rendered a sympathetic victim of the modern world, awaiting only a damsel to reveal his nobility.

Vivian also strays from her fairy tale role of the Cinderella image. Like Cinderella, she portrays a beauty, yet she is not as passive as Cinderella. She confronts her roommate, Kit (Laura San Giacomo), when she finds her rent money missing. Vivian criticizes Kit for blowing the money on drugs. When Vivian meets Edward and spends the night with him, she has the last word in the morning. Edward invites her to be his escort for the week to the tune of \$3,000, claiming he doesn't "need any romantic hassles this week." Vivian enthusiastically agrees (after price negotiation, of course) and walks him to the door saying, "I'm going to treat you so nice, baby, you're never going to let me go." She professes her power, possibly unaware that this will really come true.

After Edward's ruthless lawyer Stuckey (Jason Alexander) confronts Vivian at a polo match about her prostitution, she blows up at Edward. "I'm not your toy!" she shouts to him as she packs her bags. Edward gets in his cutting remarks in the argument, and Vivian tells him she wants her money so she can leave. He gives her the money, but she leaves without it, proving her character's moral worth. The fact that she leaves him establishes her independence, but the plot destroys this with Vivian's submission to Edward's apology at the elevator.

"You hurt me," she says.

Edward admits, "Yes."

"Don't do it again." This order may re-establish some of Vivian's power, but the fact remains that she forgives him and goes back into the penthouse.

Edward eventually realizes he may have an attachment to Vivian and offers to put her up in a condo so that he can still see



her. Repulsed by his insensitivity, Vivian says, "Never in my dream did the knight say, 'Come on baby, I'll put you up in a great condo!'" Edward hurt her again, and he seems oblivious to his wrongdoing. Yet in the end, she again submits to his irresistible power.

After their disagreement, Edward goes to work to salvage his soul. He turns down a chance to reap profits from a company takeover and instead offers to work with the owner, a man who could be considered a father-figure. Overlooking profits, Edward acts with a conscience and does the right thing. Who has influenced this change? Vivian, the hooker with a wholesome heart. Vivian has touched him in ways that he does not yet recognize; she has instilled a humanity in him by revealing his sense of emotion.

Back at the penthouse, Stuckey stops by, out for revenge for the corruption of his boss. He propositions Vivian and ends up hitting her. The poor woman's oppression never ends. To make matters better, or worse, Edward comes flying into the room to save her, throwing his lawyer out the door. Edward comforts Vivian, but she remains determined to leave. She tells him, "I want more. I want the fairy tale." He responds by saying that he's always involved in impossible relationships, indicating his lack of willingness to create a reality out of their fairy tale.

Since he won't give her the fairy tale, she walks out the door. He stops her, asking her to spend the night with him, "...not because I'm paying you, but because you want to." This line further reinforces the idea of male superiority and Edward's lack of emotional expression. He did not ask her to spend the night by saying, "...not because I'm paying you, but because I want you to." He said, "...because you want to." He will not admit his emotional involvement. The woman should submit to her feelings. Her power shines through, however, as she refuses, and

leaves, walking away from a life that would at least get her off the streets. A stubborn woman, Vivian will not settle for less than her dreams. This seems to be a confusing paradox in itself. She won't compromise her dream of falling in love with Prince Charming and living happily ever after. But she will compromise her wholesome characteristics and her deep sense of emotion by selling her body on the streets. The movie, however, convinces the audience of this possibility. We like Vivian Ward, so we believe in her.

After she leaves Edward, Vivian continues to build up her power as she quits the prostitution business and decides to venture out on her own in San Francisco, get a job and finish high school. During the final scene of the film, Vivian makes her heroic declaration; *she* will now rescue *him*.

The viewers see all of these points, and we believe that Vivian possesses a determined and energetic spirit. Yet she is prevented from becoming truly empowered. Her power builds during the last few scenes, but in the end Edward's heroics overwhelm her control. Male dominance prevails, and the movie convinces us that *he* has saved *her*.

Edward oppresses and belittles Vivian in numerous ways. Wrapped up in his heartless career, Edward does not seem capable of loving anyone. Ultimately, it is Vivian who whispers, "I love you." We assume he feels the same way, but of course, he doesn't say it. His treatment of Vivian can be justified as well. She is, after all, a hired prostitute. He has the right to treat her as a possession. In the midst of the argument revolving around his condominium offer, Edward tells Vivian, "I never treated you like a prostitute." He seems to be trying to justify his actions through her faults. During an earlier argument, however, he reminds her that she is his employee. Edward frequently orders her to "Stop



fidgeting." On one special occasion, he compliments her. "You look great. You look like a lady. Don't fidget, and smile." He seems to be saying that she was not a lady before she got all dressed up for him. This man's manipulation of people with money is obvious in his business deals and in his personal life. He hires Vivian to be his beautiful companion, like show-and-tell. He impresses her by spending an "obscene amount" of money on clothing for her. Soon, however, he realizes that she really can't be bought. At least, not the Vivian he really desires. Edward still seduces her with roses and a romantic ploy in the end, winning her heart. He saves her from her directionless life, rewarding her valiant efforts with his economic stability and love. (Well, I'm not so sure about the love. He still hasn't said that yet.)

Director Garry Marshall may have intended to present a romantic fantasy of a woman who is empowered to live out her dreams. If viewers look beyond the fantasy however, they will discover that the pretty woman relinquishes her power for romance.

Prince Charming rescues Cinderella from doom and destruction. Cinderella's spirited, caring personality helps her hero as well, creating a more-perfect prince. Her efforts will go unnoticed, however, for this prince will reign in the kingdom. She will merely sit by his side, a pretty woman with a beautiful smile, oppressed by her fairy-tale dreams.

#### **Works Consulted**

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Tavers, Peter. "Pretty Woman." Review of Pretty Woman. Rolling Stone 3 May 1990: 37.

-- *Karolyn Mallarnee*

#### **1991 NAN NOWIK MEMORIAL AWARD WINNERS**

On Wednesday, April 24th, the Nan Nowik Memorial Awards in Women's Studies were given out at the Women's Studies Picnic. The recipients in each category are as follows:

##### **Feminist Creative Expression:**

Robin Schneider, 1st place, for her short story "Is That The Moon Crying?"

Elizabeth Clark, 2nd place, for her photographic series "Her Role"

##### **Essays:**

Pam Holder, 1st Place, for a chapter of her senior honors thesis "The Female Presence in Afrocentric Literary Communities"

Cary Moyer, Honorable Mention, for her paper "Sex or Sexual Assault: A Look at Date Rape on College Campuses"

##### **Senior Academic Scholarship:**

Ellen Dickerson, Honorable Mention, for her senior honors thesis "Body Image Discrepancies and Eating Disturbances among College Women - An Application of Higgins' Self-Discrepancy Model"



Christine Thompson, Honorable  
Mention, for her senior honors thesis  
"A Cross-National Analysis of Wife  
Battering: The United States and  
Sweden"

Katy Pongonis, Honorable Mention, for  
her senior honors thesis "The  
Consciousness-Raising of Women in  
the Spanish Feminist Novel of the Post  
Civil War Period"

#### **Feminist Activism:**

Christine Thompson

Eric Franzon

Kim Schaeffer

Additional awards were given in a new  
award category, **The Women's  
Programs Award**, to those who  
"publicly espoused feminist principles  
and worked to improve the campus  
climate for women." Recipients were:

Tim Baggett

Kris Dellapina

Ellen Dickerson

Kate Folmar

Laura Hughes

Anne Mulligan

Anna Oosterbann

Robin Schneider

Cee Cee Sofronas

Ellen Stader

#### **From the Director of Women's Studies**

Women's Studies has received funding  
for the first year of a two-year R.C.  
Good Learning From One Another  
Project. Faculty will prepare seminars  
for fellow faculty members in three  
areas for the coming year: Robin  
Bartlett, Women in Economics; Gill  
Miller, Women in the Arts; and Sandy  
Runzo/Annette Van Dyke, Feminist  
Theory.

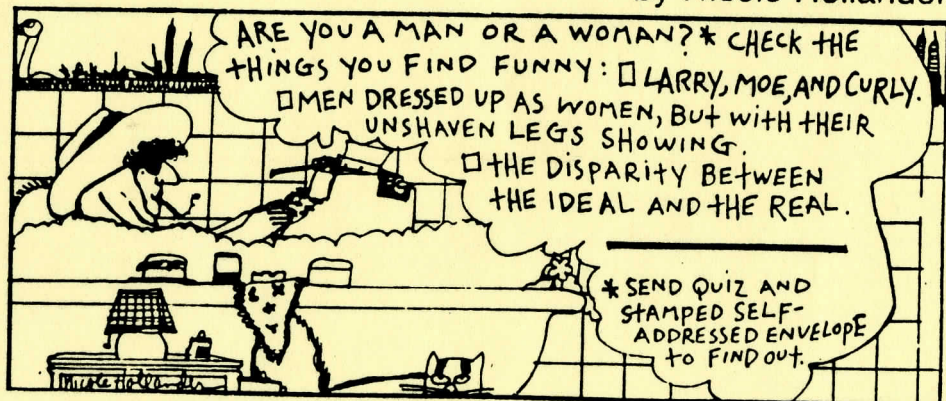
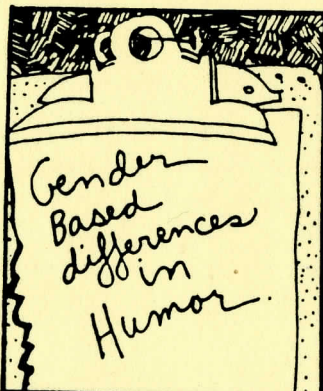
Participants will be given materials to  
read prior to each of the three seminars  
which will meet once for two or three  
hours. The goal of the seminars is to  
provide a forum to share knowledge  
about current trends in Women's Studies  
and to enable faculty to make their  
Women's Studies courses more  
interdisciplinary.

-- Annette Van Dyke

## WOMEN'S STUDIES

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



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